



PRESS NOTICE

W. WALTER WILKINS UNITED STATES ATTORNEY DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

*1441 Main Street, Suite 500 * Columbia, SC 29201 * (803) 929-3000**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT PERSON: KEVIN F. MCDONALD
(803) 929-3000

FOUR INDICTED FOR STEALING PINESTRAW FROM NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Columbia, South Carolina ---- United States Attorney W. Walter Wilkins stated that Ray Edward Miller, age 50, of Mt. Croghan, South Carolina, and Curtis Funderburk, age 51, Willie Harris, age 48, and Alonzo Blakeney, age 47, all of Pageland, South Carolina, were charged with theft of government property, a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 641 and 2.

Federal agents contend that the men raked and removed large amounts of pinestraw earlier this year from the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge near McBee, altering the protected wildlife habitat. The estimated commercial value of the stolen pinestraw is approximately \$5,000.00.

The maximum penalty each man faces is a fine of \$250,000.00 and imprisonment for 10 years.

Mr. Wilkins stated that the case was investigated by agents of the U.S. Fish &

Wildlife Service and that he has assigned the case to Assistant United States Attorney William E. Day, II, of the Florence office for prosecution.

The United States Attorney stated that all charges in this Indictment are merely accusations and that all defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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